

★ news release

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT REPORTS EARLY FINDINGS OF SPECIAL TEAL SEASON

The special season, held in September under a free permit system, was authorized by Secretary Stewart L. Udall on recommendation of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Twenty States participated in the season which was designed to gather information for future management of the early migrating blue-winged teal.

Bureau Director John S. Gottschalk said that hunting success in this special season was apparently much better in the northern States than in southern States and that teal wings collected by hunters show a much higher ratio of immature birds to adults in the northern States.

"This would explain the higher success in the North because immature ducks are more susceptible to hunting, and even the adults are not as wary at the beginning of the season," Gottschalk said.

An early analysis of teal wings by Bureau biologists found that age ratios in North Dakota were 6.8 immature blue-winged teal to 1 adult, while Texas and Louisiana had a ratio of 1 to 1. The harvest in Louisiana could have been affected by Hurricane Betsy, which disrupted the normal distribution of blue-winged teal in the Mississippi Delta area, Gottschalk said.

Adult male blue-winged teal far outnumbered females in the southern States during the early season. The ratio in Texas, based on teal wing studies, was 10.2 adult males to 1 adult female. The sex ratio for adult blue-winged teal in North Dakota was 0.6 male to 1 female.

"The analysis of duck wings, hunter questionnaires, band returns, and other information concerning the experimental season is underway at the Bureau's Migratory Bird Population Station near Laurel, Maryland," Gottschalk said. "We will learn how much additional recreation was supplied by this special season and what the teal hunters thought about early hunting. More importantly, these studies will answer the questions of many conservationists as to the effect of the special season on the teal population, as well as other waterfowl species, and whether the early experimental teal season should be repeated another year."

Significant information regarding managing teal and other individual species is expected and findings will be reported as soon as the analysis can be completed, Gottschalk added.

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